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SONGS FROM PRISON

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When he was in prison at Poona in 1930, Mr. Gandhi occupied some of his time in translating ancient Indian religious lyrics into English. Many of these are of great beauty and have never appeared in English before. The whole collection forms an invaluable anthology of Indian devotional and mystical literature. It has been prepared for the Press and arranged metrically by an English friend of Mr. Gandhi, Sanskrit and vernacular terms being omitted in order that the universal significance of the poems may be more adequately brought out.

✓ SONGS FROM PRISON

TRANSLATIONS

OF INDIAN LYRICS

MADE IN JAIL

BY

M. K. GANDHI

Adapted for the Press

by

JOHN S. HOYLAND

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1934

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All royalties accruing from the sale of this book will go to the funds of Mr. Gandhi's work for the removal of Untouchability in India.

INTRODUCTION

EXTRACT from a letter from M. K. Gandhi to J. S. Hoyland, dated December 15, 1933:—

“You asked me some time ago whether you could publish those hymns. Of course you can, provided that you give me no credit for the composition. You may say in the introduction that I had prepared a rough translation for English friends, but principally for Mira, and that you had worked upon the translation.”

The translation was made by Mr. Gandhi during his imprisonment in Yeravda Jail, Poona, in 1930, the original matter being taken partly from the Upanishads and other Sanskrit scriptures, and partly from the poets of the *Bhakti* school of thought and devotion. Where the source is not otherwise shown, it may generally be taken to be an ancient Sanskrit poem.

In preparing Mr. Gandhi's translation for publication in the West, it has been thought best to omit certain material, chiefly Indian names and symbolism. A metrical form has been adopted, and alterations made in phraseology, etc. The blame for possible errors must fall on me and not on Mr. Gandhi.

Where two poems appear on a page the end of the first poem is marked by asterisks.

J. S. H.

WOODBROOKE

May 11, 1934

SONGS FROM PRISON

In the early morning,
I call to mind that Being
Felt secretly within the heart of man,
Eternal Truth,
Eternal Wisdom,
Eternal Joy :

In his Truth, Wisdom, Joy,
Perfected souls of men may share.

* *

In the early morning
I worship him who Is beyond all thought and
speech,
Yet by whose grace all speech is uttered :

I worship him of whom the Scriptures¹ say
That he shall not be limited by words :²

I worship him whom ancient sages name
The God of gods,
Him the unborn,
Him the perfect,
Him the Source of all.

¹ The Vedas.

² Lit. *Neti, neti* (not this, not this).

In the early morning
I bow to him who dwelleth beyond darkness,
Who shineth as the sun :

I worship him who is perfection,
Him, entitled anciently the Wholly Good :

In him,
We, peering through this veil of darkness,
Imagine that we see the universe brought forth,
Even as, in darkness,
Men think a rope a snake.

* *

We bow to thee,
O Holy Earth,
Whose garment is the ocean,
Whose bosom are the mountains :

To thee we bow,
O Holy Earth,
Beloved of God the Saviour :

Forgive, we pray,
The touch of our unhallowed feet.

I bow to thee, O Saviour-God:

The universe is stayed in place by thee:

To those who seek thee thou dost show thyself,
Known in the heart's most secret meditation:

Thou drivest far the fear of death, the fear of life:

And thou, thou only,
Commandest by Thy sovereign sway all worlds:

To thee I bow, O Saviour-God.

* * *

Thou God most merciful, most blessed,
Forgive all done amiss by me,
And all of right undone:

Forgive all secret sins of thought,
All sins worked forth in deed, by hands or feet,
All sins of speech,
All sins of eyes, or ears:

And in my flesh this day
Thy will be done.

Naught crave I for myself,
Neither power nor wealth,
Nor paradise beyond,
No, not even freedom from the weary round
of being :

This only do I pray,
Release from misery
For all that suffers.

* *

God, save the people :

Grant that the rulers guard this land with justice :

Grant that beast and holy man be not oppressed :

Grant to this and all thy peoples
True happiness to-day.

I bow to thee,
Truth, from whom the universe hath being :

I bow to thee,
Wisdom, by whom the universe subsists secure :

I bow to thee,
Thou who art One without a second :

I bow to thee,
Salvation-giver :

I bow to thee,
God Absolute,
God Immanent,
God Everlasting.

* *

Thou only art our Hope, O God :

Thou, thou alone,
Art only to be sought and loved :

Thou art, of all thy world,
The sole defence :

Thou shinest, self-revealed :

In thee all being stands secure,
In thee all being ends :

Thou, thou alone,
Standest supreme,
Standest immovable and changeless.

Upon thee do we fix our mind and our thought
this day,
We bow unto thee,
O thou whose guardian glance surveyeth all :

Unto thee, O Truth, do we flee for refuge,
Unto thee, our only help and support,
Unto thee, who thyself needest neither help nor
support :

Unto thee do we come,
Ruler and Master of all,
Unto thee, safe Ark in the midst of this stormy
ocean of being.

* *

That which men name Pain
Is no true pain :

That which men name Bliss
Is no true bliss :

Pain is forgetting God,
A mind stayed firm on God,
This is Bliss.

By many names men call him,
By many paths they come to him :

But One alone is to be worshipped,
The One in whom no poison dwells, of lust or
 anger,
Whose heart is filled with pity for all life,
Who in himself is goodness, purity, perfection.

* * *

The face of Truth is covered with a veil of
 golden radiance :

Lay it aside, O God, I pray,
That I may see the Light.

pl

Thou knowest, O our God, the wayward hearts
of men :
Thou knowest all the wandering paths by which
they follow truth :

Lead us this day along the one true path,
Whereby the Goal is reached :

Wrestle within us, overcomingly,
With sin and darkness :

To thee, O God,
Our souls do eager reverence.

* * *

Man is faced by a double choice,
On the one hand, the Good,
On the other, the Pleasant :

He who is wise maketh swiftly his choice,
And he chooseth the Good :

He who is foolish,
Thinking the Pleasant more full of profit,
Will cleave unto this.

In one brief word will I tell thee
That Bliss which the Scriptures set forth,
Which the saints desire with entire self-giving,
Which devoted souls pursue, with rigorous self-
ruling :

It is God.

* *

Thither the sun's most ardent ray can never pierce,
Thither neither moonlight, nor starlight,
Nay, not even the lightning-flash can attain :

How then can this feeble Spark light unto him?

His they are,
These lesser lights :

He kindled them :

His whole vast world is radiant by his splendour.

They, the Wise,
They, who with trust and love,
With rigorous self-ruling,
Have laid aside all that they called their own,
And wandered forth to forest-poverty in Peace :

They, the Wise,
Homeless,
Dependent for their daily bread on others' grace :

They, the Wise,
Sin-vanquishers :

They enter through the Sunny Gate,
They dwell Within,
Close at his side, the Well-beloved,
The Changeless,
The Eternal.

* *

The Wise thus reckon :

Soul is a warrior :

Body is his chariot,
Reason is the charioteer,
Intellect the reins :

The senses are his steeds,
Through grassy plains of sense-known things they
bear him :

But Soul must rule,
Acting, through mind and sense.

Who is he,
The man who passes in safety
These perilous pathways of life,
And in safety comes to his journey's end,
The exceeding bliss of God's home?

He it is,
Whose reason is like to a charioteer,
Well-skilled in his work ;
And whose mind,
Like the chariot-reins,
Is held firmly under control.

*

Awake,
Arise,

Learn from the Wise their wisdom :

To traverse this pathway of life—
Thus they, the Sages, declare—
Is as hard as to walk on the edge of a razor.

Even as Fire,
Feeding on this thing and that,
Taketh from this thing one form,
And anon from that thing another :

So also God's Indwelling Spirit,
Incarnate in one being now,
And now in another,
Seemeth outwardly diverse in form ;
But in truth that Spirit
Abideth for ever the Same.

* *

✓ Even as Air,
Whilst it passeth across the world,
Is seen now as this, now as that, now as dust,
 now as smoke,
But in truth is for ever the same :

So also God's Indwelling Spirit,
Incarnate in one being now, and now in another,
Seemeth diverse in form :

But in truth that Spirit
Abideth for ever the Same.

Even as Light, from the one great Sun,
Shineth to all men's eyes,
But remaineth for ever unmarred by the dimness
which blurreth those eyes :

So also the Spirit of God,
Indwelling all life,
Standeth apart and secure from the manifold
evils in man.

* *

They alone are the Wise,
They alone reach immortal Bliss,
Who feel, and know,
Indwelling their spirits,
That one all-directing Power
Which pervadeth all life,
And appearing many
Is One.

They alone are the Wise,
They alone reach immortal Bliss,
Who feel, and know,
Indwelling their spirits,
That God
Who behind and within the changing
Is Truth unchanging,
Who of all that lives
Is the Life,
Who fulfils in himself the prayers of many,
But for ever is One.

* *

He only is holy and wise,
Who knoweth that deeds breed impermanence,
And that peace cometh not by feverish action:

In humble submission of soul
He must sit at the feet of a teacher of truth
Who, knowing the best that the Scriptures can give,
Has fastened his mind upon God.

To him who cometh in reverent awe,
With spirit calmed and unhasting,
With mind brought duly under control,
To him the wise teacher can give true knowledge—
The knowledge by which he may know that Un-
changing Being,
Who is Living Truth.

* *

God is the bow,
Man's spirit the arrow,
God again is the target:

Shoot straight, this day,
That the arrow be one with the Target.

When a man hath come to the knowledge of God,
His heart is lightened of all its afflictions,
His doubts melt away,
And he winneth, forthright,
Release from the fruit of his deeds.

* *

The Eternal God
Is before thee, behind thee,
To thy right, to thy left,
Below thee, above thee:

He dwelleth in all things:

The Whole is he:

Yet he dwelleth also Beyond and Above.

Man findeth the fulness of life
Through Truth,

Through stern self-ruling,
Through drilling his mind and his soul—
Aye, and his body also—
To the vision of that which Is :

Those who seek after God,
Freed from self-serving,
Know deep in their own true being
The Light aflame,
The Spirit, pure and divine.

* * *

Truth alone shall have the mastery,
Untruth never :

They, the Wise,
Whose End is already achieved,
Tread only the pathway of Truth,
The pathway divine :

It leadeth the traveller on,
Unswervingly on,
To Truth's own home.

Not by long study of the Scriptures,
Not by agile feats of intellect,
Not by obedient listening to the Wise,
Cometh the Spirit:

To him alone the Spirit shall be given,
Who thirsteth for it,
Who wooeth it untiringly:

To such a seeking soul
In very sooth the Spirit cometh.

* *

The fulness of life,
Which is knowledge of God,
Is not for the weak nor the slothful,
Nor is it for those who torture their flesh without
meaning:

The Wise eschew these errors,
And their souls enter, in bliss,
The abode of God.

The Wise—

They who have found, in knowledge of God,
The fulness of life :

They who are purged from desire,
Who dwell at peace,
Ruling themselves,
Their souls surely poise in tranquillity—

They, the Wise,
Have inner union with him, the Spirit of all,
And in him, with him,
Their deepest being
Floweth out unto all things.

* * *

The souls who have well comprehended,
Through diligent study of holy writings,
The innermost meaning of truth :

The souls who, through utter renouncing of self,
Are purged :

Fixing intently their heart's deepest longing
On life immortal :

These, when they pass through death,
Enter straightway God's home,
And are Free.

Even as a stream,
Joyfully rushing down into the Deep,
Loseth its name and its form,
And mergeth in the one great Sea :

Even so also the Wise,
Joyfully laying aside name and form,
Are merged in the Infinite God.

* * *

He who knoweth the Infinite God
Is one with him :

In that man's home
There is none who is void of knowledge of God :

That man hath already passed
Beyond sin and grief:

He hath won already release from all thraldom
of heart,
He hath taken already upon him
Immortal life.

From giving word of him
Both speech and thought turn baffled back again :

But those who know him, God unspeakable, un-
thinkable,
Straightway lay aside all fear :

That knowledge cometh not by anxious broodings
As to deeds undone that should be done :
Nor cometh it by self-reproachings
As to deeds done wrongly.

* *

Ye that are young,
Look warily how ye act :

Be zealous in pursuit of truth,
Be steadfast-hearted,
Hope,
Be strong :

Thus doing,
Ye shall find this earth filled full of goodly things.

The power of the spirit ruleth all wisdom ;
One man in whom this power dwelleth
Will shake a hundred who are only learned :

He who possesseth this power of the spirit
Serveth humbly his Teacher,
Is suffered to sit at his side,
Comprehendeth his teaching,
Listeneth intently,
Pondereth well what he heareth,
And thus, gaining knowledge,
Doeth his duty well
And learneth more of the truth from each little
thing that befalleth :

Through the power of the spirit
Earth keepeth her place, and the heavens above :

Through this,
Mountains, gods, men,
Brutes, birds, grasses, plants,
The deer on the plain,
Moths, insects, ants—
All life,
Is from moment to moment sustained :

For this reason,
Strive after the power of the spirit.

May blessing this day be vouchsafed us
From winds, waters, plants,
From evening and dawn,
From the dust of the earth,
From the trees, the sun and the cattle,
From the Father-heart of heaven.

* *

Not to fulfil a desire,
Not from fear or ambition,
Not even to save his life,
May a man abandon his vision of truth :

Truth stands,
But grief and joy flee away :

The spirit of man is immortal,
Its deeds die not,
And they condition its being :

But the body
Passeth.

Deeds done in the knowledge of God,
With trust and love towards him,
In a spirit dependent on him,

These become
A Strength unfailing.

KUMAR MANDIR PRAYER
(FOR SCHOOLBOYS)

In the name of God,

May he protect us,
May he support us :

May we go forward together,
True comrades :

May our search after truth find its fruit :

May we never hold in our hearts
Ill-will the one for the other :

In the name of God,
Peace.

O thou,
The Ineffable God :

From untruth lead me to truth,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death unto life everlasting.

* *

Unto thee do I bow,
O God :

Who, being almighty,
Yet hast entered this heart of mine,
And dost give, by thy power,
To my silent tongue,
To my strengthless hands and feet,
To my ears, that are deaf,
To all my lifeless being,
Life.

WOMEN'S PRAYER

Incarnate God,
Warrior for the weak against the strong,
Behold, the hosts of evil have encompassed me :

Protector,
Saviour-God,
Stretch out thine hand to rescue me,
Ere these wild ocean-waves of pain and evil
Have utterly engulfed me :

Incarnate God,
Soul of the Universe,
Protector, Saviour, Friend,
Here am I whelmed hopeless by the might of
wrong :

I cry to thee,
Come thou,
And save.

Act righteously,
Never unrighteously :

Speak truth,
Never untruth :

Look far ahead,
Never short-sightedly :

Fix thine eyes above,
Never below.

* *

Harmlessness,
Purity,
Truth,
Self-control,
Rendering each man his due :

These,
Saith Manu,
Are the common duty of all the kindreds
of men.

MANU

Harmlessness,
Truth,
Freedom from passion, anger and greed,
Rendering each man his due,
Good-will unto all that lives :

These
Are the common duty of all the kindreds of men :

These
Are the pathway of faith
Wherein tread the Wise and the Good,
With those who are freed from shifting caprice :

Such a faith
Is livingly known, deep in the heart.

* * *

Give heed to the sum and substance of faith,
Drink it in, to thy heart :

It is this :—
Do not thou unto other men,
That which thou wouldst not have them to do
unto thee :

The truth which numberless scriptures declare
Here is spanned in a word,
It is this :—

Virtue is service of other men,
Sin is injuring others.

The Sun,
The Moon,
The winds,
Fire, earth, heaven,
The heart within,
The all-seeing, all-judging God,
The day,
The night,
Evening and morning,
Faith, truth, duty:—

All these
Perceive and bear witness to what a man does :

Not even the secretest sin of his soul
Can be hidden.

* *

O foolish one,
Surrender thy desire of gain,
Make pure thy mind,
Abandon greed :

And be content with that which thou canst earn
By thine own labour.

DWADASHPANJARICA

This truth hold firmly,
Wealth is ill :

From great possessions
Cometh no happiness :

The rich, as all men know,
Fear even their own sons.

* *

These things eschew,
Desire,
Anger,
Passion,
Greed :

Ask thyself "Who am I?"

The foolish
Strive not to know themselves :
Their course is set—
Perdition.

In thee,
In me,
In all men,
There dwelleth the One God :

In all
He suffers,
And he suffers
For all :

In all, everywhere,
See thyself:
Abandon this thy ignorant conceit,
Which holds that thou art separate from other men.

* *

Like the rain-drops,
Which rest on the lotus-leaf for a moment,
Then fall,
So is man's life, fleeting and brief:

The world is filled full of pride, pain and affliction.

Thou God of gods,
Thou alone
Art my All in all:

Mother thou art,
And Father:

Brother thou art,
And Friend:

Knowledge thou art,
And wealth.

*

Lord,
Changeless One,
Grant this my prayer:

May my love for thee
Remain ever the same,
Through all lives:

May my love for thee
Be pure, and ardent:

May it far exceed
The love of the worldling for things of sense:

May it never fade from my heart:

May I ever be loyal to thee.

When the thought of thee,
My God,
Fadeth from my mind,

Then am I plunged, straightway,
Into waste and loss,
Into ignorance, folly, futility.

*

Vain it is
For God's own people to be anxious
Pondering their need of food or clothing :

Surely he, their God,
Who sustaineth with his arm all worlds,
Shall not suffer them, his own, to lack.

With head bowed low,
I ask thee this, and this alone,
My God :

In this life and beyond
Grant that I never may lose sight of thee.

MUKUNDMALA

No heart have I, my God,
For rites and duties heedfully fulfilled :

No relish have I now
For earthly joys :

Whatever is to come on me of woe or bliss,
As by my merit or my sin I may have earned,
So let it come :

This, this alone I pray,
This only do I yearn for, Lord, unceasingly,
Grant that my love to thee
May stand forever firm, unshakeable.

MUKUNDMALA

Thou Vanquisher of Hell,
Nought care I where my lot hereafter may be cast,
In heaven, or earth, or hell itself:

This only do I pray,
That evermore my mind stand fixed on thee,
O thou who art more beautiful
Than highest, simplest beauty man may know.

MUKUNDMALA

God is a ship,
Wherein men safely make voyage
Through the ocean of birth and death:

Joy and bliss of this earth,
Falsely so deemed,
Tempestuously buffet them:

The cares of this earth
Weigh them down unto sinking:

The hurricane of passion
Falleth upon them, to overwhelm them:

But in God
They are safe.

MUKUNDMALA

Be not afraid, my heart,

Shudder not, for fear thou canst not cross, thou
helpless one,
This fathomless, this raging ocean
Of birth and death :

By single-eyed devotion unto him,
By love for him alone, the Beautiful,
The Vanquisher of Hell :

By this, by this alone,
Assuredly thou shalt be saved.

MUKUNDMALA

O God most beautiful,
When life burns dim,
And death creeps swift upon me,
Thus may I still abide,
Head bowed in adoration,
Frame shaken by the wonder of thy presence,
Throat choked, eyes hotly bathed in tears,
For joy of thee,
O thou most joyful and most beautiful :

Unto the end, my God,
Thus may I take from thee
The draught immortal,
Communion with thyself.

MUKUNDMALA

✓
My God,
Before thy feet
I bow:

Thee, thee alone,
I worship and adore:

I take thy holy name upon my lips:

Thy changelessness,
Thy truth,
I contemplate.

Thou fool :

Why wilt thou drug with half a score of anodynes
Thy poor weak mortal frame?

No painlessness comes thus,
But sure increase of pain :

'Tis Life thou lackest,
Life for thy transient breath, thy slackening limbs :

Drink Life,
Life here and now,
Life whole and endless,
In one long deep immortal draught :

God is that draught,
God loving,
God incarnate,
God ever-present.

MUKUNDMALA

Begone,
Desire,
From this my heart :
For is it not God's shrine?

Begone,
Desire,
From this my heart :
The fire of God's own presence
Hath blasted thee to nothing :

Begone,
Desire,
From this my heart ;
Vanquished, annulled,
By God's own strong right arm,
Begone.

MUKUNDMALA

For those in bitter need
No other solace is there, Lord, except thyself:

Merciful thou art, and bountiful,
King of all worlds,
To whom then should we go, save unto thee?

Thou art the end and the beginning,
Thine is the kingdom and the might:

Not doubtfully we come to thee,
For well we know thy heart of pity and of love,
Thou staunch Defender of the helpless and bereft:

Thou hast turned beggars, Lord, to kings,
And here thy suppliant-slaves bow low before thee:

Then set thy seal upon us,
And whisper secretly within our hearts,
"Thou art mine own."

TULSIDAS (sixteenth century)

Merciful thou art, my God,
And I am very needy :

Generous thou art,
And I a beggar :

Forgiveness lies with thee alone,
I am a sinner, burdened low with grief and shame :

Help of the helpless,
Who is there so weak as I,
So utterly defenceless?

Mighty Deliverer,
None is there so sore beset as I.

Creator of all life,
I am the least of all that thou hast made :

Master of all,
Thy slave am I.

And yet—
Father thou art to me, and Mother,
Teacher thou art, and Friend,
My All-in-all :

Increase my trust in thee, my God,
That I may feel and know in truth
This deep protecting Love thou hast for me.

TULSIDAS

Grant me, O Master, by thy grace
To follow all the good and pure :
To be content with simple things :
To use my fellows not as means but ends :
To serve them stalwartly, in thought, word, deed :
Never to utter word of hatred or of shame :
To cast away all selfishness and pride :
To speak no ill of others :
To have a mind at peace,
Set free from care, and led astray from thee
Neither by happiness nor woe :

Set thou my feet upon this path,
And keep me steadfast in it,
Thus only shall I please thee, serve thee right.

TULSIDAS

My soul, how foolish art thou !

Thou wilt not seek the draught immortal
Of love and trust in God,
Thou followest a shimmering mirage :

Illusion-led thou wastest all thy strength
In seeking that which hath no power to give thee
peace.

My God, thou knowest all my treachery and sin,
My folly past all telling :
Thou knowest each least thought within my mind :

Remember, Lord, thy promise,
Remember, Lord, and save,
Ah, save me from myself.

TULSIDAS

Hear this my prayer, O God :

Drive far from me this folly,
Which causeth me to put my trust in other men,
And not in thee :

I ask not heavenly bliss,
Nor power, nor greatness :
I ask not wisdom, fame or wealth :

One thing alone I pray,
An ever-growing love for thee,
A love unsmirched by one base thought of merit or
reward :

Save me—I pray thee—by thy love,
O save me from myself,
From all this weakness, sin and shame, which is
myself :

Save me, I pray thee, Lord,
Save me from myself.

TULSIDAS

Thou Help of the afflicted,
To whom save thee shall I make known my
misery?

My heart is thine abode,
Yet is it held in thrall by sin :

Folly, delusion, greed,
Pride, anger, passion—
All these, thy foes, have entered in :
With tyranny intolerable
They beat me down, they strangle me :

Helpless I am, and all alone,
My foes are legion :

Helper have I none,
Save thee, thou Refuge and Defender of the
needy :

Make haste, make haste, my God,
Thieves rifle thy abode ;
Alas, alas, the shame of it !
Make haste, O Lord, and save.

TULSIDAS

None, Lord, in all the world
Is generous and merciful as thou :

Freely thou helpest,
And askest no return, no recompense :

None, none is like to thee :

Thou showerest on thy worshippers
All princely gifts :

And of thy grace thou answerest royally
The prayers of those who call to thee.

TULSIDAS

O save me, Lord :

I cannot pray aright,
My sins arise and shame me with defeat :
In grossest sloth and negligence I have forborne
To do those things in which thou hast delight :
Daily I tread the slimy path
Which leadeth down to woe and black futility :

Full well I know what I should do—
Give up myself for other men
In word, thought, deed :

But ah, I am so weak :
Ill-will and jealousy creep in,
And stifle all my good intent :

The Scriptures tell me plain
To keep the friendship of the good and pure,
But pride and passion bid me keep aloof—
And pride and passion I obey :

Thus do I take delight
In that which pileth pain on pain :

O save me, Lord,
Here only is my hope, my refuge,
In thee and in thy love :

Stretch out thy hand, and pluck me from the mire.

TULSIDAS

Know him who only knoweth what Love is :
Know him, and love him, with thy heart of hearts :
Him worship, him adore :

So only, foolish one,
Shalt thou be worthy of thy mother's sacrifice
In buying life for thee with agony.

TULSIDAS

Whate'er is shame and sin in me,
Thou takest, Lord, upon thyself,
And bearest it for me :

To thee, to thee alone,
I fly for shelter and for aid :

I claim thy promise,
That thou wilt save,
Save to the utmost sinners like myself :

Bring safe to port, my God,
This broken, battered ship, my life :

This is thy chiefest task,
This thy most ardent will,
To conquer sin in those who call to thee,
To lift their grisly burden :

Ah then, be merciful,
Be present with me, Lord, and bless, and save.

TULSIDAS

Thou knowest, Lord, this fickle wayward will of
mine :

Continually I strive, but evermore in vain,
To rule it, change it :

Greedy, selfish, shameless,
Again and yet again it cometh back unto its sin :

All, all my efforts brought to nought,
Defeated, shamed,
I come to thee :

Thou, and thou only,
Hast power to tame it and to rule it right.

TULSIDAS

Thou knowest, Lord, my failure and my shame,
All that I touch, I soil :

Yet, by thy grace,
The night is past :

Lord, I awake, to sleep no more :

For now, sure-treasured in my heart of hearts,
I hold the talisman, the testing-stone,
Thy name of love :

The things of sense have mocked at me,
My body, with imperious control,
Hath ruled my spirit :
But now, no more :

For thou, in saving love hast come to me,
Deep in my heart the vision of thy beauty, Lord,
Shineth unfading :
And when sin hurleth fierce assault upon my soul,
I lean on thee, and I am strong again.

TULSIDAS

Cease, foolish heart of mine,
To rue too late thy follies :

Body and spirit, consecrate thyself
To service of thy God :

Death creepeth swiftly on,
And death shall surely steal from thee
Possessions, dear ones, home :

Then cease to drug thyself
With thought of 'mine' and 'thine' :

Shake loose the trammels of all earthly things,
Here in this life be free :

Freedom thou winnest thus, and thus alone,
By flinging far all false delusive hope,
By trusting wholly to our God.

TULSIDAS

No soul on earth, O God,
Is low, corrupt and filthy,
Vice-rotted, anguish-racked,
As is this soul of mine :

For I have left thee, God most merciful,
Most generous Lover of the poor and weak :

Lord, I have sinned,
Most heartlessly, most heinously,
Lord, I have sinned :

All goodly gifts thou hast bestowed on me,
Yet have I spurned in insolence thy love :

Hard-hearted, base, and treacherous,
Lord, I have spurned thy princely love :

Yet here I come to thee again,
For mercy and for love :
Break, Lord, I pray, my chains.

TULSIDAS

Great sages sing the purifying power
Of God's most holy Name :

In this lies beauty, purity and bliss :

Armed with this overcoming sword
Peace mayst thou win in turmoil,
Peace eternal, here and now :

To those who trust that Name,
No doubt is left, no fear.

TULSIDAS

Trust not in stern austerities
To help thee reach thy God :

Trust only in his love :
Serve him alone :

Honour and insult hold as one :
To him, to him alone,
Pour out thy heart's devotion :

O thou invincible,
Thou who alone art sure and steadfast,
To thee, to thee,
I make my heart's obeisance :

Foe art thou implacably
To sin and misery,
To ignorance and pride,
To fear and slavery of soul :

In thee all righteousness is stored for ever,
All truth, all pity :

Lord of all being, look on us, thy helpless ones,
Drive far from us our folly and our darkness :

This boon, this only do we crave,
Eternal heart's-devotion to thyself.

TULSIDAS

✓
This and this alone
Is true religion—
To serve thy brethren :

This is sin above all other sin,
To harm thy brethren :

In such a faith is happiness,
In lack of it is misery and pain :

Blessed is he who swerveth not aside
From this strait path :
Blessed is he whose life is lived
Thus ceaselessly in serving God :

By bearing others' burdens,
And so alone,
Is life, true life, to be attained :

Nothing is hard to him who, casting self aside,
Thinks only this—
How may I serve my fellow-men?

TULSIDAS

None is so helpless as I :

None is so full of mercy and love
As thou,
O my God :

Therefore grant me release, I pray,
From this crushing burden of self.

TULSIDAS

I bow my heart to thee this day,
O thou most merciful, most mighty :

Thou givest power to the lame
So that they nimbly climb Himálaya :

Thou givest sight unto the blind,
So that they see the beauty of thy world :

Ears thou givest to the deaf,
A voice thou givest to the dumb :

Majesty thou givest, joy, and kingly grace,
To souls stripped, empty and forlorn.

SURDAS (born A.D. 1484)

Lord,
In all my life,
Thy will be done for me :

Thou knowest all man's lot, his bliss, his woe,
What need to tell it all in words to thee?

Thou knowest all our burden, all our want :

This, this alone I pray,
Make me thy loyal servant, evermore.

SURDAS

Fool,
Why trustest thou in thine own strength,
Why boastest thou thy piety,
Why gloriest thou in wealth of things thou hast?

The day shall come,
When, helpless, naked, reft of all resource,
Despair and anguish overwhelming thee,
Blind, and a beggar, thou shalt know thy folly :

Then shalt thou call upon the name of God,
Help of the helpless,
And ere thy cry is uttered,
Grace, help and love shall come.

SURDAS

Thus saith the Lord:—

To those who love me, I belong,
And they belong to me:

Sure is my promise,
It shall never be recalled,
When any needy one shall cry to me,
Then in an instant I am at his side,
To help and save:

He who hateth those I love,
Hateth me also:

Fear not, for I am with you,
My hand is on your chariot-reins:

When anguish of defeat assaileth you,
Mine is that anguish:
And when you conquer,
Your victory is mine:

Fear not, I will deliver you.

SURDAS

Alas, who is there on earth amongst men
So crooked-hearted,
So evil, gross and treacherous as I?

Lord, I have forgotten thee,
I have forgotten thee, who gavest me my life :

Like an evil beast,
I have gorged my basest desires :

I have left God's people :
Day and night I serve those who revile him :

What sinner is baser than I,
I am chief and prince of them all :

Where, ah where,
Is there peace, my God, for a sinner like me?

SURDAS

Lay not to heart, O God, my faults, my sins :

Thy love is equal, unto all mankind,
And thou canst save :

Even as a ditch, narrow and filthy,
Floweth out into Ganges,
And straightway is Ganges itself :

So would I join unto thee,
So save me, O Lord, into union with thyself.

SURDAS

My God,
In agony I yearn for sight of thee :

Friendless I am, forlorn,
Around me nought but scoffing folly :

What have I, Lord, save this alone,
The joyful vision of thy face.

SURDAS

How shall I praise thee, Lord, for all thy love?

Thou condescendest to the humble,
Thou bearest company with those, the simple-
hearted,
Who hold no store of this world's goods,
But only love for thee :

Thou comest unto them,
Not as the heaven-compelling King,
But secretly, and humbly, as a servant :

Thou sharest joyfully
In all the simplest joys of those who with humility ✓
Love thee aright :

Unworthy, Lord, I am of this thy love,
My heart is proud and stained with selfishness,
Yet even here thou hast made known this love of
thine :

How shall I praise thee, Lord.

SURDAS

Lord, hear my shame :

In gross self-pleasing I have flung away my life,
Clad all my days in hatred and desire,
Passionate, infatuate,
My tongue corrupt with evil words,
My mind made poisonous,
Surrounded close by bad companionships,
Insatiable in selfishness,
Bound helpless by my ignorance of truth,
Consumed by fierce ambitions,
Forgetting that which Is, concerned alone with that
 which seems—
Such have I been :

And such, my God, is still my state,
As now I come to thee, and ask thy saving grace.

SURDAS

This, this alone,
Is Truth eternal:

God is,
God loves:

His face is ever seen
By those who worship him in true devotion:

God of all beauty is our God,
And those who see his face bear with them ever,
Stamped on their inmost soul, the vision of that
Beauty:

His love fills all things,
He knoweth all the secret places of man's mind,
And knoweth all in love.

SURDAS

Friendless I am, O Lord,
Alone, and helpless :

My foes have girt me round about,
Shame, insult, outrage storm upon me :

No refuge have I save thyself,
No guardian,
Thou art my All-in-all :

Thou, thou, my God, art everything I need,
Father, and Mother, strong Protector, Friend :

Thy little flock, O Shepherd, will not fear.

SURDAS

The sages and the scriptures teach in vain
That as a man sows, he shall reap :

One who hath stained his soul with heinous sin
May yet be saved :

A hundred generous oblations
May fail to save a man from loss eternal :

The pauper may be made most rich,
The outcaste gain a kingly state :

Thou workest marvellously, Lord,
No bound or limit is there to thy conquering love.

SURDAS

Save me, O Lord,
Ah save me now :

Thou Fount of mercy,
A shipwrecked mariner I toss,
Storm-battered in thy trackless universe :

High rage its waves around me,
Delusion and desire,
Passion and lust and hatred :

Soon, soon my soul shall sink beneath the burden of
my sins,
To rise no more :
The tempests hurl their might upon me,
And anchor have I none,
For worldly cares have driven far my thought of
thee :

O thou most merciful,
Behold my peril :

Here in mid-ocean,
Out-wearied, powerless,
I sink, I sink :

Stretch out thy hand, O Lord, and succour me,
O bring me safe to shore with thee.

SURDAS

My life is wasted utterly :
Pride, selfishness and greed,
Have scattered it in ruin :

I have forgotten thee, my God,
Who gavest life :

My own true self
I have forgotten :

I thought that earthly joys, poor passing shapes
of beauty,
Could minister to all my need :

But now I know that nought but dust lies there :

The past is ruined, lost and gone :
Whilst there was time to do and live,
On these dim vanities I wasted all I had :

Thus come I now to thee, my God,
Duty undone,
Thy service all neglected,
One blot of sin and shame.

SURDAS

Lord, save me,
Save me now :

Lord of lords art thou,
Giver of all things good :

Helpless am I, and blind,
The chief of sinners :

All worlds thou rulest,
I am thy slave :

Thou hast rescued, in thy grace,
Not righteous men alone, but sinners also,
Then be thou gracious unto me :

My sin outweighs the sins of thousands,
Hell itself would be corrupted by my coming :

Lord, remember now thy promised grace,
Thou hast saved many,
Redeem thy word, and save me also.

SURDAS

Open thine eyes,
And thou shalt See :

Him shalt thou See,
Whom thy most secret soul doth love :

In all he dwelleth,
Therefore say nothing ill of any man :

Boast not thy wealth, thy youth,
The day shall come when such shall play thee false :

Fling wide the windows of thy darkened heart,
Maintain thy soul's deep purpose, fixed and sure :

Awake, and know the temple where thou dwellest,
For in this shrine of flesh abideth God Eternal :

Rejoice, rejoice,
For clear within thy soul
His voice is speaking,
His grace is scattering boons beyond all price.

KABIR (fifteenth century)

This, by his grace, hath God revealed to me :—

Whatever I do is to be to his service,
Whatever I say is to be to his praise,
Whatever I hear is to be a reminder of him,
Whatever I eat or drink, I must eat or drink in
remembrance of him :

One passion only must I know,
Delight in him,
The vision of his beauty :

That vision fills my heart,
No room is left for stern austerities,
No room for dark, diseased imaginings :

My mind is fixed in thought of him,
Whate'er I do, I see, touch, taste, hear him :

In him I live, and move :

This, this alone,
Is life and bliss :
This, this alone,
Is all the burden of my song.

KABIR

When the soul is filled with the Holy Spirit of God,
No need remaineth for speech :

When a man hath found a gem of exceeding price,
Doth he not shut it safely away?
No need is there to bring it publicly forth all day
long before men.

When there is doubt of the worth of a jewel,
Then is it brought forth publicly, tested and weighed ;
But why should men test and weigh that which is
Worth itself?

A man transported with love,
Drinketh not love drop by drop,
Weighing each drop in the scales.

When the swan hath found, at last,
The most holy Lake,
Doth he wander more, seeking for wayside pools?

Thy Lord dwelleth close within thee,
Why strainest thou then thine eyes to descry him
without?

Give heed, good friends, give heed,
I have found,
I have found,
I have found.

KABIR

Brief is the space of our sojourning here,
To us this earth is a foreign land :

Empty it is, cruel, and vain,
Swift shall it all be consumed :

Give heed, good friends, give heed,
One hope of safety there is, one only,
God,
God's protection,
God's love.

KABIR

One purpose only have I,
To give up all for his dear sake :

Herein is Joy,
Joy such as worldly happiness can never give :

Whatever comes to thee of good or ill,
Bear it in patience :

Live poor,
And live for other men :

When all a man possesseth
Is staff and beggar's bowl,
Then doth he rule all earth as his :

Soon, soon, shall this thy body
Be ashes,
What room then hast thou, friend, for pride?

Give heed, give heed,
This way of peace shall lead thee on to Life.

KABIR

Friend, know this,
That love bringeth arduous watching, hardship
and sorrow :

Yet, if thou hast tasted love,
All things are thine :

This, only this, remember,
Love may not be hoarded up,
Love thou must hand on.

KABIR

Let the world go by thee,
Thy business is thy God :

Leave other men their little hurrying cares,
Be thou at peace in him :

Heed not the yelping curs around thee,
Forge straight upon thy course toward the Goal :

If thus thy mind be set on him,
Low-minded men will cease to harass thee.

KABIR

Yield not to self-deception,
Sing with thy every breath the praise of God :

Thou hast eyes,
And eyes thou hast that they may look on God :

Ears thou hast,
That thou mayst hear wise words of praise to him :

Thou hast a mouth,
Then use it for the singing of his praise :

Hands thou hast,
Hands to hold out to other men, in service of his
name ;

Thy life is as a mine,
From which may come dust, dirt and worthless
pebbles,
Or gold.

KABIR

Who but our Guide shall show the path to us?

Steep is that path, and perilous,
Deep-cut by yawning gulfs of doubt,
High-piled with rocks of selfishness and greed,
Girt in by frowning cliffs of lust and hatred,
Beset by brigands of ambition :

Swift falls upon the lonely wayfarer
The tempest-shock of pride,
Delusion buffets him amain :

Who, ah who, shall walk this way in peace
Without a Guide?

KABIR

The body of man is his garment :

Warp and woof of that garment are cunningly
woven,
With threads very surely compacted :

God, even God himself,
Hath deigned to wear this our garment,
Prophets and holy sages
Have donned it also :

Yet we, poor mortals,
Though we wear this garment with heedfullest
care,
Soil it and mar it most shamefully :

And thus soiled, marred,
At length we lay it aside.

KABIR

Vaunt not thy youth, thy great possessions,
Soon, soon they vanish :

Thy bones shall burn like faggots,
Thy locks like grass :

Hast thou not heard of the mighty prince
Who built him a lordly palace,
And before it was finished, his enemies came,
And he fled away, to dwell in a forest-cave?

Give heed, ye who are wise,
Death cometh to all ;
And when death cometh,
All the airy castles we build
Crumble to dust.

KABIR

Here is the burden of all my song :

He hath utterly lived in vain
On whose lips liveth not
God's name.

KABIR

O my soul,
How shall I show thee
The Truth?

If thou wert gold,
I would melt thee :

If thou wert a steed,
I would bridle thee,
Set a saddle upon thee,
And whip thee to action :

If thou wert an elephant,
I would chain thy feet,
Mount thee,
Goad thee with the ankus :

If thou wert iron,
A smith would I be, serving at the anvil,
Hammer thee, beat thee into wire :

If thou wert wise,
More wisdom would I give thee,
Lead thee along the straight path,
Guide thee at last to immortal bliss.

KABIR

Thy name, O Master, is the garland upon my neck :

This body of mine is the humble cottage wherein I
abide,

My Lord himself hath given me the key,
And whenever I choose I may open the door and
come forth :

I don the garment of love for him,
And forth I fare to delight in the streets of his city :

The day will come, good friends,
Wherein I shall leave this cottage of mine, to return
no more.

KABIR

He who is valiant of heart fleeth not from the face
of peril,
And he who fleeth from peril is craven and base :

Behold, the battle is joined,
Fierce, fierce is the onslaught :

Anger, passion and pride,
Ambition, lust and desire,
Are the foes who ride wildly upon us :

At our side fight our friends,
Self-rule, truth, piety, peace.

The warrior's sword is the Holy Name,
And we brandish it wide :

In that war
Cravens are never seen,
But the valorous fight in the van.

KABIR

My God, I take refuge in thee :

At the sight of thy face all my doubts flee away :
Before I have spoken my grief, thou dost know it :
Wondrous things hast thou done, that I cannot
forget :

My grief thou hast banished away, joy abideth for
ever :

Thou hast drawn me up by thy hand from the deep
dark well of illusion :

Heartless I shunned thee, my God, yet thou hast
redeemed me,

Thou hast brought me back to my Home :

Praise be to thy name,
Joyful praise to thy name !

NANAK (born A.D. 1469)

Ye that thirst after righteousness, give up your pride,
Flee always from passion and anger and evil com-
panionship ;

He knoweth the secret of life who hath passed beyond
bliss and woe,
Who perceiveth that praise and blame are but one,
Who is ravaged neither by fierce exultation nor yet
by despair :

This pathway is hard,
Yet by this alone may the truth be won,
Few, few there be who travel therein, with a Guide.

NANAK

Nought care I now—my God, thou knowest—
For “mine” or “thine” :

No man I hold an enemy or stranger,
All are my friends :

From good men’s comradeship
This have I learnt,
That all which cometh from thy hand
I shall receive as good :

Herein is all my deepest joy,
To know that thou, the One,
Abidest, Lord, in all.

NANAK

Dedicate thyself, my soul,
To serve thy God :

Give heed unto his praise,
And hymn it forth :

In fellowship with pure and holy men
Think ever on God's beauty, gaze on him,
Thus shall thy life be purged of sin :

Bear this in mind—
Time like a dragon waiteth hidden,
With jaws wide opened to engulf thee :

Brief, brief is life,
Remember, then, thy God.

NANAK

Why dost thou go to search for him
In lonely forest-glades?

For ever God abideth in thee,
And yet above, beyond thee:

As is the fragrance in the flower,
As is the likeness in the mirror,
So is God also everywhere at all times:

Search for him, friend, within thyself:

Give heed to what the sages teach,
That God is both within us and beyond:

Until thou knowest this,
Until thou knowest him who dwelleth in thyself,
The dark dank mists of self-delusion
Shall cling around thee still.

NANAK

Remember God, my soul :

Thy years are rolling by without his holy name :
And man, without the name of God,
Is but a well wherein no water is,
Is but a shrine wherein no lamp is kindled,
Is but a tree on which no fruit is found,
Is but a body born without an eye,
Is but a night without the moon,
Is but a field without the rain,
Is but a sage who knoweth not the scriptures :

O thou who wouldst be holy,
Watch heedfully desire,
Give up ambition, pride and anger :

God is alone thy Friend
To aid thee thereunto.

NANAK

Why hast thou forgotten God?

Anger hast thou not forgotten,
Nor falsehood :

Then why hast thou forgotten Truth?

Sunk deep in this world's futile show,
Why hast thou remembered not the Home,
From which thou camest?

Thou hast clung to the dross,
Then why hast thou thus flung away
The Gem beyond price?

Joy thou pursuest,
Then why hast thou scorned the one Source
of all Joy?

Turn,
Trust God,
Fling from thee all that is less.

NANAK

All man's wise intention
Cometh in the end to naught :

Time hath thee in his grip :
If God thou hast forgotten,
Nought shall avail thee friends or children,
Home, wealth or power :

One thing alone can help thee,
The service of thy God :

Far hast thou wandered,
Adversity hath thrust thee down,
And now old age hath gained its grip on thee :

One help, one hope alone is left,
Thy Maker's love.

NANAK

A jewel is mine,
God's most holy name :

The one true Teacher gave me this jewel,
And he showed me therein his boundless mercy?

What though all earthly wealth is lost,
Safe-stored I hold this treasure eternal :

No thief can touch it,
No use can tarnish, no spending consume it :

From day to day my treasure waxeth more and more :

In the vessel of Truth,
With the one true Teacher my Pilot,
I have crossed the ocean of birth and death,
I am safe, and at Home :

Shall I not gleefully sing the praise of God's Name?

MIRABAI (sixteenth century princess)

As the leaves of a tree shall wither and fall,
So shall this body perish :

Wild is the ocean of birth and death,
Wrought by fierce tempests and terrible currents,
Full of arduous peril to cross :

Take for thy raft, O voyager,
The thought of God,
Thus shalt thou safely pass over that ocean :

Remember the word of the sages of old,
Listen also to me, God's handmaid,
Few are man's days on the earth.

MIRABAI

My soul, now bow thyself down at the feet of thy
Lord :

That touch
Brings fortune,
Brings peace,
Brings joy,
Brings the end of afflictions :

That touch
Shall give strength
Which shall bear thee in safety across this wide
ocean.

MIRABAI

Let the whole wide world be my witness,
For me none other there is
Save God only :

Brothers, friends, kinsmen,
Wholly I have renounced :

I rejoice to be fellow of God's holy men,
I take no pleasure in other companionship :

With my tears I have watered the flower of love,
The dross I have flung away,
But the gold I have kept :

My afflictions are known far and near :

One thing I do, one only,
I joyfully worship my God.

MIRABAI

My Lord is a little child :

All that I had in life
I have given for him :

Some say I have paid too dearly,
Some say he is cheaply so gained,
But I—I have weighed the price, and the gain,
And I know—ah I know.

Some say he is far to seek,
Some say he is close in thy home,
But I—I have found him,
And a little child is he, in the cradle of love.

MIRABAI

My mind is fixed on my Teacher :
No peace have I without him :

All else is a dream, a mirage :

The ocean of birth and death hath vanished away,
No care have I now for the crossing thereof :

For now, O my God,
I behold thee plainly.

MIRABAI

Thou savest thy servants, O Lord, in their need :

For our sake thou becomest man,
To save us :

Thou destroyest the arrogant,
Thou rescuest those who sink in the waters of
death :

This thy servants know well, whom thou lovest—
When the cry of pain goes up unto thee,
Thou hearest.

MIRABAI

Make me thy slave, my God :

Thy garden-keeper will I be,
And every day will feast mine eyes upon thy
presence :

As through thy leafy glades I wander,
Of thee, of thee alone, shall be my song :

All my reward shall be in this,
My daily vision of thy presence :

The thought of thee,
And deep devotion to thy name,
These, these alone shall be my wealth :

But these shall be enough :

Windows will I have within my dwelling-place
Whence I may look on thee ;

Secret shall be thy coming,
But patiently thy slave will wait.

MIRABAI

He who speaketh ill of me,
Is my true champion :

Unrequited worketh he my good,
Without reward he giveth me his aid in casting
off my sin :

Very dear is he to me,
I pray thee, God, for blessings on him :

For he, even he,
In speaking ill of me
Is my true helper.

DADU (born A.D. 1601

Still doth cruel life
Cling obstinately to the body :

Too long, too long, my God,
Have I been severed from thy presence

But soon the night shall pass,
Dawn break,
Thy promise gain fulfilment :

I wait,
Longingly, my God, I wait for thee.

DADU

My God,
This heart of mine is sore distraught,
How shall I worship thee aright?

Thou seest me,
And so, if love were mutual,
I should see thee :

And yet,
I see thee not :
Therefore I wander, all disconsolate :

In all thou dwellest, Lord, for ever,
Yet have I never learnt to know thee :

Thou art the Fount of purity and goodness,
I reek with sin :

My treachery, my black ingratitude,
Have dragged me down :

The world's delusion, selfishness and greed,
Have overwhelmed me :

Thou God of mercy,
Sole stay and hope,
Come swiftly to my aid,
And save.

RAIDAS (fifteenth century)

Awake, awake,
O thou who sleepest in sloth :

The thieves, the dissolute,
Keep watch at night,
So also do the saints who meditate on God,
Then why not thou?

Thy body is an hostelry,
Thy soul the traveller :

Brief is thy sojourn,
One night alone :

Then the day breaketh,
And thou must forth again :

Keep good men's company,
Serve the Master,
Worship him :

Thus keeping vigil,
Thou shalt have bliss.

NITYANAND (seventeenth century)

A ship may take many a course,
Yet be guided in all by the one polar star :

So also, he who is wise,
As he moveth hither and thither on earth,
Keepeth his gaze ever fixed on the heaven :

As ice is melted in water,
So also this man gaineth freedom
By losing his being in God :

How shall we tell of his bliss,
Whose dwelling is there,
Where neither beginning nor end is known :
Where neither the mind nor the speech can attain ?

Few, few there be
Who know the Ineffable Joy :

And he who hath known it from ancient time
Speaketh from heaven.

AKHA

Brother, the day hath broken,
Awake,
Remember thy God :

No friend hast thou save him,
No sister, no brother :

Who but he, in the day of death,
Can help thee and save thee from doom?

On that day,
Alone thou shalt be, no friend but One at thy side :

Beware, O my brother, beware,
Take refuge in him,
Worship him :

He alone can remove thy sin,
He alone can grant bliss at the end.

SAHAJRAM

He alone giveth joy,
He, God of gods,
Lord of lords,
Death of death :

He, the boundless,
He, the infinite,
He, the Prince of the humble-hearted,
He, who is my life :

NAND DAS

For whom shall I harbour ill-will?

God dwelleth in all men,
All men he holdeth alike in his equal love :

By his grace, for this cause,
I will ever walk fearlessly on.

HARIDAS (early seventeenth century)

Those who so list may praise me,
Those who so list may blame,
They may say what they choose :

Come what may, this is all my concern,
I love my God :

He giveth the sun and the moon their light,
He sustaineth the sky without pillars,
He maketh the islands to float on the sea,
He helpeth the humble :

How shall he not, then, save me?

Through all the world
I will serve him and love him.

JASVANT

God's saints dispel the mists of ignorance,
And guide us forward graciously to him :

Kind they are, and tender-hearted,
To all God's creatures :

In love and helpfulness,
Plain to be seen they bear upon them,
Implanted deep, his likeness :

No thought of selfish comfort soils such spirits,
No fickle whim, no stain of worldliness :

In knowledge of such men,
Our hearts are led to know our God.

BRAHMANAND

Fear God,
Neglect not him :

Whilst thou hast time,
Be watchful :

Do heartily thy task,
Knowing that death is hovering about thee :

Be thou not proud of health or beauty,
For soon thou shalt be ashes :

Death's messengers are stealing near thee,
No mercy is with them :

Worship thy Maker,
Cling to him,
Thus shalt thou have salvation.

BRAJKISHOR

O thou who art Protector of the universe,
Ruler of all its destinies,
Abode of happiness and peace,
Ocean of mercy,
Friend of the poor and needy,
Destroyer of the woes of penury :

Thou who art everlasting,
Thou who art perfect, whole, and pure,
Unending, unbeginning,
Ancient of days,
Refuge of thy people,
Their Lord ineffable,
Matchless, adored,
Guardian of the worlds,
Mainstay of life,

Thou art my heart's Beloved.

My God, my Friend,
I ask of thee one boon alone,
Thy love and care :

Dull, dull I am of heart and wit,
Nought do I know of thee,
No love I bring thee :

Yet those whom thou hast saved,
Never, to endless aeons,
Shalt thou desert :

No merit is there to be found in me,
Whereby I might commend myself to thee,
Sin-marred I am, and foul :

Yet if thou heed my sin,
O Life of mine,
And give me up,
I perish :

Steadfast is my faith in thee,
Never wilt thou forsake my need :

Thou wilt forgive, for thou art generous,
Thou who art Friend of all the poor :

I know not, in my folly,
Thy mysteries divine,
But, Lord, I worship thee,
I trust in thee,
With all my soul,
Lord, I adore thee.

PREMSAKHI

O thou, my soul's Beloved,
I run to thee for refuge :

Wisdom or learning have I none,
Nor power, nor riches :

My trust is in thy love alone :

Ocean of Mercy, thou hast lifted me,
And borne me up, from the abyss :

A little child am I,
I run to grasp thy aiding hand :

Forget me not, my Lord,
Who am so helpless :

Hold me, for ever safe,
Thy slave :

Beloved of my soul,
I stake my all on thee.

PREMSAKHI

Spirit Divine,
I pray for the vision of thyself:

By this shall I come unto bliss eternal,
By this shall the chains of the world be broken:

To attain this vision bitter pains have I borne,
Austerity and penance,
Rites and pilgrimage:
How long must I continue so to suffer?

Some say that thou art found by action heedfully
performed,
Some, by the mind's deep knowledge:
But foolish are such sayings, one and all:

Not by such pathways may man win to thee,
Nor gain the Joy supreme, the boon beyond all other
boons,
Thyself:

Thou art above them, Lord, and all their systems:

Thou art in all,
And yet—in all thou art not:

Perfect thou art, beyond imagining,
Thou workest secretly, and very wondrously:
Formless thou art, and indefinable,
Master thou art, and servant too.

Thou makest all,
And thou alone, O God,
Knowest thyself:

The Scriptures name thee the Unknowable;
Yet here thy servants sing thy praise,
For they have known.

Star of mine eyes,
Show thyself in love to this thy servant :

Thou Friend of the afflicted,
Fountain of pity,
Original of all true virtue,
Youth, power, eternal beauty :

Grant, Lord, ah grant this boon,
The Vision of thy beauty face to face :

In hope of That, my God,
I meditate on thee, by night and day.

RASIK

Already, in this life,
I have attained to Immortality :
I shall not perish :

For me, for me, is broken,
Once and for all, the weary round
Of birth and death :

The chains of self-deception, greed and hatred,
Whereby a soul is fixed upon this wheel of earthly
 life,
Are broken all away :

From time's beginning man has died,
But I have conquered Time itself :

Soon, soon this mortal flesh of mine
Shall joyfully be laid aside,
And I shall live,
Immortally shall live :

Therefore I cleanse myself against that Day,
Cleaving to purity of heart and life :

In God I have this certainty of life undying,
In God and in God's love,
Close to my heart :

He, he alone,
Hath conquered death in me, for me.

ANANDGHAN

By many names is he called,
But he himself is One only :

The vessels are diverse,
But the clay whereof they are made
Is one :

Difference we may imagine,
But Truth is one and indivisible :

All real goodness is God himself,
All mercy,
All self-sacrifice,
All truth,
All knowledge of that which Is :

Thus, in deepest stillness of spirit,
Inwardly, I know the Truth himself.

ANANDGHAN

My God,
Have mercy on me, break my chains :

Thou leavest all thy bliss to save thy suppliants :
The helpless and the base-born,
Even the sin-stained, Lord,
By love and trust in thee
Are saved :

I pine for vision of thy beauty :
Accept me, save me, Lord,
As thou hast saved thy saints of old.

VIDHICHAND

All, all my trust, O God,
Is stayed on thee :

Of old thou savedst many,
And knowing this I come :

I come, O Master, seeking shelter from thy love :

O thou, All-powerful, All-knowing,
Thy will be done for me.

PREMANAND (nineteenth century)

This world seemeth fair,
A garden gay with flowers :

Yet sojourn here is brief,
Swift shrivel all earth's joys :

Prepare, O traveller, prepare,
Soon must thou bid thy friends farewell, and get
thee gone :

Few days are left for kindliness and grace,
Then use them well :

Bear ever in thy heart remembrance of thine end,
For soon, ah soon, it cometh.

NAZIR

Thou alone art King of my heart,
Thou alone my Beloved :

Day and night, my Creator,
I rely upon thee, upon thee alone :

Only from thee have I solace for all my distresses,
Thy love bindeth me wholly in thrall,
Thy name burneth ever in praise on my tongue :

All the vain pleasures of earth have I flung away,
In thy love alone I take my delight :

My soul hath been knit unto thee in true knowledge,
Deliver thy servant from all that is evil.

Thy law, O God, is wondrous :

When the heart of man is truly set to find thee,
Then thou art found :

For creeds thou carest nothing,
An honest heart in him that seeketh thee
Is all thou dost require :

To him who giveth heart and soul to thee,
Thou dost reveal the splendour of thy love :

He who loveth thee,
Becometh like to thee in spirit :

He who hath forgotten self
Becometh one with thee,
But he in whom the love of self abideth
Wandereth forlorn and desolate :

He who trusteth in thy name
Shall see thee face to face :

Such a man is like a beggar,
Who hath found a pearl beyond all price.

Put on thy most beautiful garments, my soul,
Thou art bidden to go to thy Lord :

The shroud is of earth,
The bed is of earth,
Earth shalt thou be, in earth :

Wash, and be clean,
Adorn thyself heedfully,
Thou canst never return from that place whereunto
thou art bound :

Thou art bidden to go to thy Lord.

* * *

My boat is very small,
Heavily laden with stones :

The waves run high around,
The stream is wide, and very swift :

The tempests smite my boat,
Dark rain-clouds fill the sky :

Take thou the helm, my God,
Oh let thy mercy steer her on,
And bring her to the farther shore in peace.

GIRIDHAR (seventeenth century)

God's truest saint is he,
Who holdeth other's woe to be his own :

No pride hath he,
He speaketh ill of none,
He holdeth all alike in honour :

He ruleth well his speech,
His passions, and his thoughts :

Always he speaketh truth,
He layeth not his hands on other men's possessions :

Pure is he, and chaste,
No self-delusion bandageth his eyes,
His mind is drawn away from earthly things,
No lusts, no ill desires sear his soul :

He loveth well the name of God,
He knoweth well that God's most sacred shrine
Is man's own body :

Generous is he, and free from cunning,
He yieldeth not to anger :

One such man
Bringeth by his presence purity
To all around.

NARSAIYO

Our God is very near :
Nay, he is within us :

And yet, we see him not,
All our lives long, we see him not :

Lord is he, Lord and Indweller,
Of all the worlds,
And yet the worlds perceive him not :

Thanks be to him for holy souls,
Who see him, and reveal him :

Thanks be to him that, seeing them,
We look within,
And find him also here,
Deep-hidden in ourselves.

RAMDAS (seventeenth century)

That man is true
Who taketh to his bosom the afflicted :

In such a man
Dwelleth, augustly present,
God himself :

The heart of such a man is filled abrim
With pity, gentleness and love :

He taketh the forsaken for his own :

The servants in his home
He treateth as his own dear children :

No need to praise him more :
These words suffice :
In such a man God dwelleth.

TUKARAM (born A.D. 1608)

My God,
Thou, who art mercy and love,
Ocean-deep,
Ocean-wide,
Hear this my prayer :

At one sharp cry of pain
Thou art with the despairing soul :

In pity, power, saviour-love
Thou comest :

All lovely, gracious things,
Thou teachest :

Grant this my prayer,
That evermore my soul may dwell intent
In vision of thy beauty.

EKNATH (born A.D. 1548)

My God,
Rather, I pray thee, blind my eyes
Than let them gaze on sights that kindle lust :

Rather make deaf my ears
Than let them hear an evil word of any man :

Rather seal my lips with dumbness
Than let one sinful syllable come forth from them :

Rather sweep my life away from earth
Than let Desire flame up within my heart :

From henceforth, Saviour-God,
All worldly things are dust to me :
Thee, thee alone,
I long for, and adore.

TUKARAM

He who dwells in constant close dependence on his
God
Can never be deluded by the specious nothingness
of earth :

Such an one,
By listening to God's word,
By treasuring that word within his heart,
By meditating on his Friend's indwelling love,
Fears death no more :

Such an one
Is blessed with all good things
Scattered around him by the love of God.

AMRIT

Grant me,
My God,
To love the fellowship of those thou lovest,
Of those whose hearts are set to do thy will
In truth and goodness :

Such fellowship
Bears bounteous fruit of inward bliss :

Thou lovest, Lord, to grant the prayers,
To satisfy the heart's most secret cravings,
Of those whose minds are bent to worship thee :

To those who love thee
Thou bringest in the end
All joy.

AMRIT

Give thyself, my soul,
To worship and adoring of thy God :

Let foolish men say what they will :
This, this alone is worthy of thy doing,
To garner love for God and man :

Let praise and blame go by thee unregarded :
Cease to consider self and self's demands :
Cut loose Desire :
In simple truth of soul
Worship thy God :

All vain imaginings,
All doubts,
Cast far away from thee :

Body and soul, commit thyself
To him who teacheth thee the truth within thy soul :

Forgetting all things else,
Fix now thy thoughts on him,
Thy Friend.

SHIVDINI

Who but a fool
Shall lay by stores bound swiftly to decay?

What profiteth a man
His high-built mansion?
Surely a humble cottage is enough!

What profiteth a man
His gorgeous raiment?
Surely a tattered coat is better!

Take thou with relish
From day to day
Whatever sustenance God's grace shall give thee:

So shall the gifts that fill a beggar's bowl
Bring thee a joy beyond the rich man's guessing.

AMRIT

Let not thy days go wasted by,
Empty of praise to God :

Fear not the transient vicissitudes
Of life and death :

Who feareth these
Feareth illusion, nothingness,
And yet is reft, by fear,
Of union with his Maker :

Tend well the Lamp within,
The Lamp of knowledge of the Living God :

Weigh heedfully thy speech,
That words may witness to a balanced soul :

Waste not thy toil on pompous show of learning,
'Tis but to plough the sands !

Store well thy mind with wisdom,
Wisdom sure-tested,
By comradeship with honest-hearted men :

Be thou not rash, in things untried
To form opinion :

Where burneth bright the lamp of Knowledge,
Day dazzles not, nor night appals,
For by that Light are all deeds done.

SOHIRA

Thrice blest that land,
Thrice blest that house,
Where servants of the Living God take birth :

God is himself
The faith, the works, of such :

Through them the Universe itself is sanctified :

No barrier of race or tribe
Can wall such men from God :

The lowliest-born,
Through love and trust,
Through deep devotion to their God,
Have gained salvation's gateway :

The saints of every creed and caste
Are gathered there, around God's feet,
Made one in him, through love and loyalty to him :

No man can count their names :

Once lost they were, forsaken, desolate,
But now,
Through God's free grace,
Blissful and saved, they live in him.

TUKARAM (born A.D. 1608)

Whoso would be God's man
Must tread God's way of stern self-ruling :

No hasty words for such a man,
No slothful ease,
No dainty meats,
No vain disputings :

Be resolved of this—
Whate'er thou doest, eatest, speakest,
Shall all be ruled aright :

He who would win to Peace,
Must fix his mind most ardently on God :

Even as a lamp,
Blown perilously, all but quenched by stormy winds,
Is brought within, and there flames steady,
So shall thy soul be brought within,
And steadfast flame to God.

My God,
Wheresoever I go
Thou art my Comrade :

Lonely I fare through the world,
Yet never alone,
For thou art my Friend :

Thou ledest me on,
Thy hand set fast in mine :

Thou liftest the burden from my shoulder,
Thou bearest it thyself :

Foolish words I speak,
Yet thou, Lord, settest all right :

Thou hast taken away my fear,
Thou hast made me strong-hearted :

Thou hast taught me to see in all men my friends,
My guardians, my kindred :

Thou hast given me, O thou most bountiful,
The peace of thy presence, within and without.

TUKARAM

Master,
I love thee,
Reveal to me, I pray,
How worthily I may adore thee :

Come, oh come,
Abide with me,
Indwell this narrow heart of mine :

When wilt thou give me power,
My God,
To serve thee truly?

Cleanse me from untruth,
O thou who art thyself alone
The Truth :

Come, dwell thou in my heart :

Sinful I am, and very weak,
And yet thy power,
O Saviour-God,
Can save, can save, from blackest depths of shame
and sin.

TUKARAM

To those who love thee,
Lord,
No dearth, no yearning is left,
Even for salvation :

No itch have they to know their future lot :

For them, it is enough
That thou art with them alway, till the end,
Indwelling,
Steadfastly abiding in their hearts :

For such
End and beginning are the same :

Happiness and woe
They leave alike to thee, their God :

Untouched by outward turmoil
They dwell at peace :

Their strength of mind and sinew
Is consecrated to the need of men

Within their hearts
Thy gentleness, thy mercy, Lord,
Come welling up in power :
Nought hold they for their own,
But all is held for others' profit :

Thy likeness, Lord, is stamped on them,
Plain to be seen,
And where they live dwells, even now,
Eternal Bliss of thine own Heaven.

TUKARAM

What words, what speech,
Can tell the joy of those who know our God?

Their life is lived
Not for themselves, but for the need of men :

In others' service
They suffer arduous adversity :

Mercy towards all that lives—
This is their spiritual substance :

They give no second thought
To what may benefit themselves :

Their bliss they find in others' bliss alone :
And all unknowingly
They hand to other men the draught immortal.

TUKARAM

Thou canst not buy true goodness in the market :
Nor canst thou win it unto thee by distant pil-
grimage :

It dwelleth not in rich men's storehouses,
Nor yet with hermits in the forest-depths :

No gold can purchase it :
It is not to be found in darksome mines below,
Nor in the wide blue sky above :

One price alone can bring it unto thee,
The giving of thy life :

If for the sake of this great prize
Thou wilt not give thyself, with all thou hast and art,
Then cease to prate of goodness.

TUKARAM

He, he alone,
Is God's true worshipper,
Who layeth all desire from him,
And hath this aim alone
God and God's praise:

From that high quest
Neither by wealth, nor friends, nor parents,
Shall such a soul be turned aside:

With this one Friend to strengthen him
No pain, no grief can crush his soul:

His purpose is not moved:
Straightforward goeth he
To God, with God:

The Living Truth
In all his doings leadeth him.

TUKARAM

In this one word
Lies essence of the everlasting Truth,
Truth behind Scripture,
Truth deeper than inspired teachers' song,
Truth brighter than all holy men's most ardent
vision :—

“Seek God, take refuge safe in him,
Cleave to his love and praise his name, with all
thy heart.”

TUKARAM

This heart of mine is fixed and set :

Life holds, for me,
Nought beyond this :

One end and object is there only
Of all my thought, my aspiration :

Awake, or dreaming,
One vision only do I see :

Body and soul
One yearning fills me wholly :

God :

And I—
Ah wonder, even I—
Have seen him.

TUKARAM

Foodless am I, and shelterless,
No home have I,
For me no children's prattle riseth at the eventide:

Yet am I rich beyond compute,
All love I have, all joy:

For I have God,
His grace I know, his love:

Come pain,
Come all adversity,
With thee, my God, enthroned within,
No ill can overtake me:

Let transience pass,
A dream it came,
A dream it goes again:

For me abideth Permanence,
Immortal Joy,
In inward touch of soul with thee, my God.

TUKARAM

No saint is he
Who harboureth within contempt of any man
However low or sin-besmeared :

No hope is left of spiritual peace
For him who harboureth contempt of any man,
Not if he give his very life to save his soul :

Filthy and contemptible himself
Is he who harboureth contempt of any man :
For, as a man shall think, deep in his secret soul,
So shall that man become.

TUKARAM

Come life, come death,
For me one steady purpose still abideth,
To serve and love thee better, Saviour-God :

My God,
I cleave to thee :

Set on my lips thy name,
Set in my heart unending love for thee :

Such is my aspiration, Lord,
And yet, thou knowest,
My heart is weak, my will most fickle :

Grant then the strength,
By which alone this end shall be achieved.

NAMDEV (born A.D. 1270)

This is true merit,
To serve other men :

This is heinous sin,
To harm other men :

There is but one freedom,
And that is truth :
But one bondage,
And that is untruth :

Salvation is this,
To have God's love for ever in thy heart :
Perdition is this,
To forget that love :

Companionship with all the good and true,
This is Heaven,
Neglect of all the good and true,
This is Hell :

Choose which thou wilt,
The choice is plain before thee.

TUKARAM

Grant, Lord, this boon alone :

I ask not riches nor prosperity,
I ask not Heaven :

But this I ask,
Gift far beyond all other gifts,
Which is itself,
Life, bliss, salvation :

I ask this only—
Fellowship undying
With that which is supremely, wholly Good.

TUKARAM

This is my last petition :—

My God, who knowest all,
Be very near to me :

Send down thy grace, thy love,
As here my soul, adoring,
Bows at thy feet :

This, this is all I need,
Thyself, thy grace.

TUKARAM

Remember alway thy God :
Surrender thy thoughts of self :
Think of the source from which thou art come :

Not thine own is thy body,
For, try as thou wilt, thou canst not keep it for long :

Fling away thy longing for riches,
This above all is a stumbling-block set in thy way :

Lo, very nigh to thee here is thy Lord,
And thou dost not know him :

Awake, awake,
Thou that sleepest :
Awake, and desire, thy foe, shall fall from thee.

NARSAIYO

With all thy mind
Worship God :
With every word that thou utterest
Worship God :
With every deed that thou doest
Worship God :

As a snake discardeth his skin,
So, for God's sake,
Thou must give up thy father, thy mother,
Thy sister, thy son, and thy wife.

NARSAIYO

He who is truly a saint, and a man of God,
Prays not for salvation :

He prays not for release from birth and from death :

This is his one desire,
To be born again for unending service,
And so—by service, by praise and by song—
To meet his God face to face.

NARSAIYO

In this world of men
Worship of God is the greatest bliss,
Nought greater is there than this, even in heaven :

Men of God pray not for selfish salvation,
They long to be born again, even here on this earth,
That evermore they may serve their fellows,
And singing the praises of God meet with him face
to face :

He who hath truly praised God,
Hath fulfilled the ends of his birth,
And happy is he :

In the sun of God's presence
Is fulness of joy.

NARSAIYO

If any dissuade thee from praising God's name,
Forsake him :

With all of thy mind, speech, will,
Worship God :

For his sake leave thy home and thy friends, if
he call,
As a snake discardeth his skin :

The saints of old gave up all for God,
And so gained all :

Go thou and do likewise.

NARSAIYO

Remember thy God,
Give up self,
Think of the Home whence thou comest :

What art thou, friend, and what dost thou cling to
so greedily?

“This is mine : that is mine,” thou criest,
But remember, not even thy body is thine,
For, strive as thou wilt, thou must give it up :

Thou thinkest always of riches,
And, thus thinking, thou fallest deep in the mire :

Thy God is thy wealth, and him, poor fool,
Thou knowest not :

Thou hast squandered the talents he gave,
Thou hast wasted thy life in futility,
And still thou art slothfully sleeping :

Awake, awake,
List to the voices of wise men of old :

Awake, awake,
Lay aside thy shame, and this agelong dream of
desire.

NARSAIYO

In all the universe, my God,
Thou only hast existence :

Thou seemest many,
Yet art One :

Being thou art beyond all form,
Light thou art beyond all darkness :

Thou art the Word in the scripture,
Working secretly and in the void :

Air art thou, earth and water,
A thousand thousand forms thou takest,
And seemest many, yet art One :

A nugget of gold, and a golden ear-ring,
Bear different names,
Yet are they each of them gold :

Thou art the seed in the tree,
And thou the tree from the seed :

Grant me, O God, a discerning mind,
To pierce through delusion :

And teach me this—that if in true faith I adore thee,
Then thou wilt show thyself unto my soul as thou
art.

NARSAIYO

Until the secret of the soul be known,
All rites are vain :

If thou hast never known the Soul of souls,
No alms, no penances,
No pious prayers, no knowledge of the scriptures,
Can aught avail thee :

Thy life is wasted utterly,
Thou art not yet a man,
If trusting in these outward ceremonies,
Thou hast not yet known God.

NARSAIYO

Mourn not over that which thy Lord ordaineth :
Without his will not one blade of grass can we move :
Care leaveth but this—a treasure of sorrow :

Even as a dog, who is running beneath a cart,
Thinketh that he himself is bearing the weight of
the cart,
So also those that are foolish
Fancy that they themselves bear the weight of action :

Few, few are the wise,
Who know that all things depend upon him :

But thou, couldst thou have thine own way,
Wouldst destroy all thy foes, keep living none but
thy friends,
Have no man to rule, no man poor,
And bestow upon all men unlimited riches :
A fine world that !

Even as a plant giveth forth in its season
Leaves, fruit, flowers,
So also man shall receive what is due in due time :

Give not thy mind to vain fancies,
Vaunt not thine own iron creed :

Know that wordly joys are all vain,
God only, in life and in death, is all that thou
needest.

NARSAIYO

I will awake unto truth :

This world is a dream :
Flowers and fruit are from the same Tree :
The branch thereof is one with the Stem :

Life springs from the will of God,
To know him, the Lord of all Worlds,—
Herein is salvation.

NARSAIYO

Thou slothful fool, give heed unto God,
And thy wounds shall be healed :

No other path can lead thee on to peace,
All roads save this lead but to death :

From dedication to God all good gifts flow,
In seeking that Shelter is bliss beyond words :

Cast from thee delusion,
Rest before him :

Turn not away from the truth,
Put not thy trust in the empty fancies thou buildest :

Show in action and will thy love for thy God,
In poverty praise him—his praise is all wealth.

NARSAIYO

⌚
This shrine is ruined :

Teeth gone,
Gums shrivelled,
Limbs a-totter :

But the Dweller therein is yet young,
And I dwell with him :

Ah God, may I love thee more,
And drink in thy love.

MIRABAI (sixteenth century)

I will never forget my God,
For he is in my heart :

Beautiful he is, and very joyful :

No need of words,
I have given my all to him,
Who is Master and Lord.

MIRABAI

Utter no word but God's most holy name :

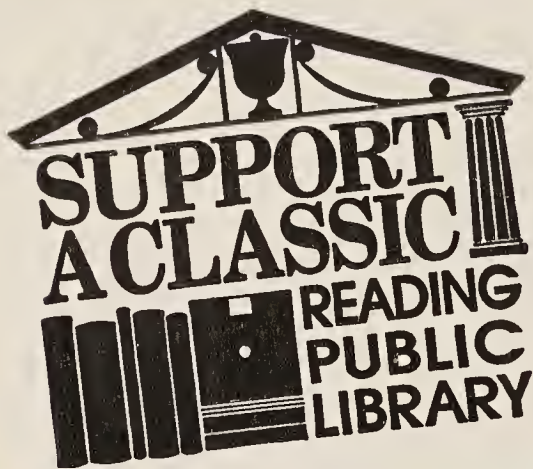
Chew not the bitter leaf when sugar-cane is nigh :
Take not a firefly for thy light when sun and moon
are in thy heavens :

Choose thou not lead when precious jewels lie at
hand :

All, all I have given for God,
And my loss is great gain.

MIRABAI

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